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SUBJECT: CONTINUING PROBLEMS WITH TIMS DATACOM SYSTEM IN ALBANIA

Summary

¶1. (SBU) As part of the combined donor effort to improve rule of law in Albania, the Department of Justice's International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program (ICITAP) in Albania has worked with the Albanian State Police (ASP) to install Total Information Management System (TIMS), a computer system linking all border entry points, police stations, prosecutors -- essentially, all of Albania's law enforcement community. In 2003, the European Commission (EC) agreed to install the TIMS Datacom backbone that would allow interconnectivity between points, and committed to a 10 million euro investment. The Datacom project has completely stalled and no work has been completed. This situation ensures that the USG-donated systems, which now total close to 10 million dollars, do not fully function. End Summary.

Negative Impact of Unfilled Promises

¶2. (U) The EC DataCom involves the installation of a series microwave towers and dishes across Albania to provide the primary communication network by which TIMS will function. TIMS is currently operating on landline, satellite, and limited microwave systems, which the USG is paying for although the Albanian government is taking over some of these costs. The effect of the non-completion of the Datacom Backbone has been profound on the TIMS system and the overall development of Albania's rule of law. The Datacom system was planned to serve as the primary communications backbone for the entire TIMS system. It was to provide stable, affordable connectivity country-wide. In its absence, many of the planned benefits of the TIMS system for the Albanian State Police cannot be realized.

¶3. (U) Although TIMS is fully functional at nearly all border points and a few police commissariats, more than 60 police commissariats around the country are not connected to the TIMS architecture. This deprives them of internet connectivity, VOIP telephone service, and access to the Event Report system for filing crime reports. There are financial impacts as well. With the absence of the VOIP function, the ASP must continue to pay for commercial telephone service for its communications. Our ICITAP program must fund alternate means of communications, including satellite connectivity for remote border crossings, leased landlines, and microwave communications equipment for the Tirana area commissariats. These expenses reduce funding available for other needs.

¶4. (SBU) At one point, the GOA and OSCE planned to use TIMS as the core of the civil registry system Albania is seeking to develop. This is part of the effort we have collectively urged on Albania to regularize not only its data collection and storage, its system of passports and id cards, but also the conduct of normal elections.

However, OSCE has told us they had to abandon the idea of working through TIMS because they saw no hope that the EC DataCom project would function. OSCE has launched its own tender for a parallel system. Unfortunately, this is not an option for TIMS.

Comment

15. (SBU) COMMENT: The ECD has more than adequately funded the DataCom project. The performance of SAGEM - the contractor - has been marginal at best and completely ineffective at worst. Some of the blame lies with the GOA and its inability to secure agreements and/or access to mountaintop sites for microwave installation. But even with that, it should not have taken five years to get DataCom up and running. These delays have postponed full implementation of TIMS, thus increasing USG costs. Additionally, the lack of the Datacom backbone has had a direct effect on the quality of policing in Albania. Non-existent or substandard communications have reduced the ability of border posts, commissariats, and investigative units to coordinate activity, identify criminals, and take timely action. The lack of the Datacom system also affected the cost of development of an effective civil registry. It has had profound, negative implications for the quality of the rule of law in Albania.

WITHERS